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LETTER

ADDRESSED TO THE

EDITORS

OF THE

BOSTON DAILY ATLAS.

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BOSTON:

1836.

This letter originally appeared in the Boston Daily Atlas, May 5, 1836.

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[To the Editors of the Boston Daily Atlas.]

GENTLEMEN:

I have read, in one of the Journals of the city, a note in the following words:

"The Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Encampment, &c. &c. THOMAS POWERS, (Clerk of the Police Court) is a most devoted, bitter and persecuting Mason. This Mr. T. P. said in my hearing, not two years ago, with great emphasis and bitterness, 'SUMNER should not be again appointed Sheriff after his present commission expired.' This was said because Sumner wrote a letter about the Institution. All such facts are important, as they show the danger, the improper spirit, and the improper influence of Masonry."

Yours, ALDEN BRADFORD.

Whatever justification "this Mr. A. B."—I take the expression from him—may find for presenting my name to the public in a guise so uncourtly, I shall not assume his example as a warrant for using similar phraseology. He has indulged himself in unprovoked invective; and, were I to retort by denominating him "a devoted, bitter and persecuting" antimason, I might find quite as much authority in the terms of his note, as he chooses to discover in a solitary instance of my opposition. But it is not by this use of odious names and severe epithets that the public will infer a disposition to convey the purity of truth, or to present a portrait of living character; nor can it be supposed, that even this "Mr. A. B." has the assurance to imagine that the weight of his name

will be a sufficient guarantee for the correctness of his delineation. He has voluntarily sought for such notoriety as he may gain. The affair is not of my seeking.

If I could have considered myself justified, for a moment, in following the half sneering and half serious enumeration of titles prefixed to the note, I might have begun: An ex-minister of the gospel, sometime clerk of a court, sometime Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, sometime editor of a paper and of a magazine, sometime practising justice in the County of Bristol, now compiler of newspaper paragraphs, &c. &c. But it is not often that such a course can either benefit the answerer or enlighten the public. Because one man descends to low vulgarity in noticing another, it is but a poor apology to retort in similar terms.

That I may have sustained the Masonic office named, I have never felt cause of self-reproach; nor, I may say without vanity, do I believe that others had cause to blush at my "devotion" to its requisitions. Whatever mysterious inuendoes are implied under the *et cæteras* of "this Mr. A. B." it is much to be regretted that he has not elaborated his ominous characters, so that the community might have the benefit of the titles. That I am "Clerk of a Court," is certainly my good fortune. I have never considered it a reproach; and if "this Mr. A. B." will retrace the varied scenes of his life, he may recall a time when he thought it no dishonor. I may hope, however, that among the items of my biography it shall never be recorded that I was dismissed from my office, either for want of competency, or for want of proper attention to its duties. It is probable that "this Mr. A. B." deems it no dishonor that he once sustained the office of Secretary of State. The remembrance may be grateful to him. But, if common report speaks true, "this Mr. A. B." who is so exceedingly sensitive on the score of oral remarks

made on the conduct of an officer of the County, had no scruples in giving practical evidence of a disposition to write down the Chief Magistrate, while employed in an official, confidential relation to that Chief Magistrate.

It is said that I am "a devoted mason." If I have not, under the terror of proscription, shrunk from retaining my relation to an institution with which I have been connected for a great number of years, and if I have not been intimidated into humiliating admissions at a confessional which neither my judgment nor my taste has approved, am I for this to be held up as worthy of popular odium? I have yet to learn that it is very honorable or very moral, to hold connexion with an association formed either for political, religious, literary or social purposes, and to esteem the ties of fraternity so lightly, that I may either be the hypocrite while professing an unreal attachment, or with impunity become a knave in pretending to unreal wrongs. It may have been my good fortune not to be tempted, by the expectation of a paltry reward, to offer up my integrity as a sacrifice; and whatever of truth there is in the imputation that I have been "a devoted mason," it is no small cause of satisfaction to me to know, that my children will not have cause to blush that I have sought rather to acquit the demands of an honest conscience, than to seek temporary notoriety from popular excitement. If, in thus being "a devoted mason," I am exposed to be visited with denunciations, still my choice is made; and I shall patiently abide the issue. In this view, at least, I owe to "this Mr. A. B." my acknowledgements for admitting my integrity.

He says I am "a bitter and persecuting mason." For a number of years I have been marked out as an object of uncompromising hostility and vindictive animadversion; and this, to my sincere conviction, wholly unjustifiable. And for a number of years I

have been assailed both by ridicule and by threats, in every variety of odious shapes which the ingenuity of base and unprincipled men could invent.

Papers, of various kinds, both printed and written, have been forced upon my attention so frequently, and so impudently, with anonymous notes of a character so indecent, that my irritation has sometimes so far mastered my discretion, that I have been led into expressions, which, unprovoked, would be extremely blame-worthy. But there is a point of endurance beyond which it would be meanness to pass —a degree of patient forbearance which is better evidence of insensibility than of resolution. I have spoken freely of their authors, and I have spoken undisguisedly of their aiders and abettors, whether in office or in expectancy of office, of the designing managers who gain a precarious subsistence by defaming men better than themselves, of the degraded whippers in, and the degraded and misled who are whipped in. And thus it stands. I have been assailed by every possible mode of abuse ; and because I utter my resentment, it is affirmed to be evidence that I am "bitter and persecuting." Why should those who do me the injury complain? The felon may as well complain that the law is "bitter and persecuting," because its correctional influence is made to be felt.

If I had found myself standing on the verge of the vale of years, my resentments diminished by the infirmities of age, my sensibilities blunted in the conflicts of political rivalries, and my expectations weakened by repeated disappointments, I might have entertained a justification for my silence then and now. I never would, voluntarily, when the frosts of age were admonishing me that I had nearly done with the agitations of time, and were bidding me to prepare for the solemn realities of eternity, provoke the pity or the contempt of the world. Whatever feelings of self-complacency "this Mr. A. B." may en-

tertain, in gathering the expiring embers of ambition, I may take to myself the merit of being the innocent cause of his gratuitous offering to the public; an offering not more extraordinary as an evidence of imbecility, than as a literary curiosity. I take also to myself the satisfaction of knowing that whatever sentiments I may have expressed, under excited feelings, I have not violated the conventional bonds of society, have not requited kindness with ingratitude, nor given evidence under my hand as the humiliating condition of reward. And it will be a consolation to me hereafter to know that I have ever held more in scorn the man who requites favors with injuries, than the starving wretch who barters away the products of a prostituted pen, for his scanty bread.

Of all the various employments in which "this Mr. A. B." has been engaged, few will compete with him for the honorable station to which he has descended in recording and publishing the casual conversation he may have heard; and the most efficient correction which eaves-dropping has ever received, is found in the loathing and abhorrence in which it is held. I envy not the man his new honors.

I have never asked or received a favor from "this Mr. A. B." nor have I ever done him an injury. He has asked and received favors from me, and he has endeavored to injure me. I am sure, had he asked other favors of me, I should have cheerfully aided him, without requiring any condition that should degrade him. Besides, it is some compliment to "this Mr. A. B." that I have thought him worthy of being answered; but for the benefits of any temporary notoriety he may gain by it, I acquit him of every obligation he owes me.

I have one regret in this business which I name with some reluctance. It is this; that without the possibility of doing me a material injury, this mistaken man has unwittingly been led into a measure

which must degrade him in the estimation of honorable men, and must weaken the hold he may have had upon their sympathies and assistance.

If it will give "this Mr. A. B." or his friends any satisfaction to know what influence I may have used in the re-appointment of an officer to the County of Suffolk, I say that I have not, either directly or indirectly, taken any part in opposition, either by writing, advising, or by my signature to any paper, or by encouraging the circulation of any paper. When I say this, I know that neither "this Mr. A. B." nor any other will have the hardihood to affect a disbelief of my pledge. Having said this, I will add that I have said of the gentleman and to the gentleman now holding the office alluded to, that I consider as my political enemy every man who holds himself out as a political antimason; and that I will oppose him by all the lawful and honorable means I may choose to adopt. It is not a little extraordinary that the gentlemen, now holding the office alluded to, has personally admitted to me the right so to act, while "this Mr. A. B." affects to consider it as an evidence of "the improper influence of masonry." I repel the imputation that a mason has a right to my support, but I admit the truth of my honest and "devoted" opposition to antimasonry.

For occupying so much space in your paper, Gentlemen, perhaps I owe an apology to the public; but the controversy was not of my seeking; and for the patient hearing which I am sure I shall gain from you, and hope to receive from them,

I am their and your
obedient servant,
THOMAS POWER.

May 3, 1836.

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